

# HOUSE . . . . . No. 130

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By Mr. Ayers of Quincy, petition of Bruce J. Ayers for legislation to assure that polling places are accessible to handicapped and elderly voters. Election Laws.

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## The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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In the Year Two Thousand and Five.

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AN ACT ASSURING THAT POLLING PLACES ARE ACCESSIBLE TO ELDERLY  
AND PHYSICALLY-CHALLENGED VOTERS.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General  
Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:*

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 10 of the General Laws is hereby  
2 amended by adding after section 35Q the following new  
3 section:—

4 Section 35R. There is hereby established on the books of the  
5 commonwealth a separate fund known as the Polling Location  
6 Accessibility Fund, to promote improved involvement in the elec-  
7 toral process by physically-challenged and elderly individuals.  
8 Said fund shall consist of all monies appropriated therefore in  
9 each fiscal year and any funds donated to the commonwealth and  
10 designated for this purpose. All monies appropriated to said fund  
11 shall be made available for distribution upon appropriation.

12 All revenues credited under this section shall remain in said  
13 Polling Location Accessibility Fund to assist cities and towns of  
14 the commonwealth in paying all or part of any costs associated  
15 with local initiatives to improve the physical condition of polling  
16 locations that may contain obstacles to access, or impediments to  
17 movement for elderly and physically-challenged residents wishing  
18 to vote. Said fund may also be distributed to fund all or part of the  
19 costs associated with programs designed to increase the number of  
20 overall percentage of elderly and physically-challenged voters  
21 casting ballots at a state or federal election. All grants from this  
22 fund shall be made on a competitive basis pursuant to rules and

23 regulations published by the office of the state secretary and all  
24 monetary awards shall be granted only at the discretion of the  
25 state secretary.

26 The state treasurer shall deposit the fund in such a manner that  
27 will secure the highest interest rate available consistent with the  
28 safety of the fund and the requirement that all amounts on deposit  
29 be available for immediate withdrawal. All monies appropriated to  
30 said fund but unexpended at the close of the fiscal year shall not  
31 revert to the general fund but shall remain designated within said  
32 fund and be available for expenditure in subsequent fiscal years  
33 for use consistent with this section. The fund shall be expended  
34 only for the purposes herein stated at the direction of the state sec-  
35 retary.

1 SECTION 2. Chapter 54 of the General Laws is hereby  
2 amended by adding after section 10 the following new section: —

3 Section 10A: The state secretary is hereby authorized and  
4 directed to establish a grant program for the purpose of assisting  
5 cities and towns in paying all or part of any costs associated with  
6 local initiatives to improve the physical condition of polling loca-  
7 tions that may contain obstacles to access, or impediments to  
8 movement for elderly and physically-challenged residents wishing  
9 to vote. Grants made pursuant to this section shall include but not  
10 be limited to the substantial alteration and remodeling of a polling  
11 location for the specific purpose of better accommodating elderly  
12 and physically-challenged residents exercising their right to vote  
13 on election day. The state secretary may also make grants to  
14 increase the number or overall percentage of elderly and physi-  
15 cally-challenged voters casting ballots at a state or federal elec-  
16 tion. All grants from this fund shall be made on a competitive  
17 basis pursuant to rules and regulations published by the office of  
18 the state secretary and all monetary awards shall be granted only  
19 at the discretion of the state secretary subject to available appro-  
20 priations in the Polling Location Accessibility Fund established  
21 pursuant to section 35R of chapter 10 of the General Laws.